

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**EUROPEAN SECURITY IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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At the beginning the third millennium, the world balance of power changed. 9/11 events determine a reorientation of the U.S. external policy and a new approach on Wider Black Sea security environment. After a decade of decline, due to its energy policy, Russian Federation is recovered and is trying to regain its position as World's second great power. To accomplish this goal, communist Russia uses dirty politics, blackmails, frightens, permanently jeopardizing international security environment.

This project examines geopolitical, geoeconomical and geostrategical tendencies, vulnerabilities, risks and threats in the Wider Black Sea Area. The research reveals the existence of a "Soft War" which opposes the U.S. and E.U. on one side to the Russian Federation and its allies from Shanghai Cooperation Organization on the other side, a soft war which can easily become the Second Cold War. It involves access to energy resources and distribution, the Russian efforts to maintain and extend its hegemony using regional instability, secessionist enclaves, sabotage and paramilitary violence, terrorism and heavy criminality. The project also examines Western regional interests and provides both for the U.S. and E.U. recommendations meant to evolve regional security environment and to counteract Russian offensive actions.

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## EUROPEAN SECURITY IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA

### Regional Geopolitical, Geoeconomic and Geostrategic Tendencies

#### The Black Sea and Balkan Region

For many centuries, from a geopolitical, geoeconomic and geostrategic point of view, the Black Sea and Balkan area's importance was based mainly on the region's role as a point of intersection between great powers that played a critical role in Europe's history (Greek, Roman, Ottoman, Prussian, Austro-Hungarian and Russian). This area was a link and a frontier, a buffer zone and a transit corridor, between West and East or North and South. The region represents a point of linkage for commercial nets and areas rich in energy resources, but also "... a civilization black hole in the Western historical consciousness."<sup>1</sup> This area flourished in the periods when it was involved in world trade, but was also considered "the powder keg of Europe" when it was isolated. In the political environment the area is part of the wider Black Sea area and includes the "Euro-Asian energy corridor linking the Euro-Atlantic system with Caspian energy supplies..."<sup>2</sup>

Today the Black Sea and Balkan area is characterized by transformations caused by a painful separation from communism and the Soviet sphere of influence, and by transition from isolation to the values of democracy and free trade. Some of the states from this region are now NATO and European Union (E.U.) members, and others are trying to become eligible by fulfilling NATO and E.U. conditions. At the same time, a reviving Russia is trying to build a politico-military and economic block in order to regain its position as a major player and a great world power.

#### The Main Regional and International Actors

The main regional actors involved in the economic and security complex of the Black Sea are the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Georgia (parts of the former Soviet empire), Turkey (a Black Sea power and NATO member), and Romania and Bulgaria (NATO and E.U. members).

#### The Russian Federation

During the last decade, Russia confronted a major crisis generated both by economic and by socio-political factors that caused the country to lose its status as the second world superpower. In 1990 – 1991 Russia pleaded in favor of a "directorate" of the great powers in the Balkans and for maintaining former Yugoslavia. But after the Yugoslav crisis and because of active U.S. involvement in the area, Russia gave up its hegemonic claims. Political analysts consider that today's Russia is focused on social reorganization, economic recovery, and

strengthening the Federation while, at the same time, seeking improvement in relations with the U.S., NATO, E.U. and Central Asian states.

Initially, the Russian Federation had a hostile attitude toward the integration of countries from wider Black Sea area into Euro-Atlantic structures. As time passed, the Kremlin understood that the process was irreversible and adopted a more pragmatic strategy. While South-Eastern Europe advances on its Euro-Atlantic course, the Russian Federation remains culturally and commercially very active in the area. Moscow is striving to improve relations with the E.U. on a “bloc to bloc” basis; develop bilateral relations with all the states of the region; occupy strategic positions in East European markets; consolidate its position in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova; and perpetuates the area’s “frozen conflicts”. Russia remains a source of instability in the region. Its leaders oppose any security or stability initiative that does not come from Moscow; encourage tensions between the U.S. and Turkey; use energy supplies as weapons; sustain undemocratic regimes and practices; and stir up U.S.—E.U. tensions hoping to create a crisis situation.

#### **Ukraine**

Ukraine is “the largest East European country.”<sup>3</sup> Internally it confronts numerous religious and ethnic tensions and externally has disputes with Russian Federation concerning Crimea and with Romania over Snakes Island and the Danube Delta. Its exterior commerce is orientated to the Russian Federation but Kyiv also controls important Russian oil and gas exports (the *Druzhba* pipeline).

Ukraine has traditions of being Russia’s “younger brother” and a buffer against the West, but also has excellent relations with Poland. The U.S. is interested in connecting Ukraine with Black Sea cooperation structures, as well as oil and gas transit from the Caspian basin. Today Ukraine remains caught between the West and Russia. After the 2005 Orange Revolution, the country seemed to be orientated to the West, but after 2006 parliamentary elections, a pro-Russian Ukraine re-emerged under Prime Minister Yanukovich. Russian pressure and Ukrainian indecisiveness caused two NATO exercises planned for Crimea in 2006 to be cancelled, and the fact that 60 percent of its population opposes NATO accession, hurts relations with both the U.S. and NATO. “The 2005 elections … produced a pro-Kremlin … majority in the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) to replace the Orange Coalition.”<sup>4</sup>

#### **Turkey**

The modern Turkish Republic straddles Europe and Asia. Its remarkable strategic position makes Turkey a pillar of NATO. Its moderate Muslim government maintains a fragile equilibrium

between civil society and the Armed Forces. Turkey wants to become an EU member but must accept the Copenhagen criteria regarding democratization and human rights. Its stability depends on loans from the U.S., EU, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank. Strong relations with the EU and the massive U.S. presence in Middle East guarantee a favorable international position.

In the Balkans, Greek—Turkish rivalry is a historic problem and includes disputes over territorial waters and Cyprus. A Greek - Turkish cooperation is vital to assure the security of oil and gas pipelines linking Iraq, Iran, and the Caspian basin to the West. Past tensions with Russia concerning the Chechen wars, Muslim rights, and the Kurdish question have diminished. Turkey supports the efforts of states from the Caucasus and Central Asia (especially Azerbaijan and Georgia) to strengthen their independence. Regarding the Black Sea area, Turkey desires stability but without U.S. or E.U. involvement which can diminish its own status as regional power. Recently, the country has distanced itself from the West and moved closer to Russia. “Common interests and common adversaries are creating new security bonds between the two neighbors ... E.U. indecisiveness also strengthens Turkish ties with ... Russia, that are convinced that the West will never accept Muslims into their Christian Club.”<sup>5</sup>

Today Turkey is looking to increase its influence in the Black Sea area. The Turkish—Russian partnership in the region is focused on minimizing U.S., E.U. and NATO influence, discouraging NATO actions in the area (such as “Active Endeavor 2006”), enhancing trade ties (especially in the oil and gas sector), and developing common energy projects.

### Romania and Bulgaria

These states are advancing on the path of democracy and are considered pillars of E.U. and NATO regional policy. Both countries seek to stabilize the security environment and promote multilateral cooperation. They can become living examples of democracy and open markets for their neighbors, but must continue to fight high levels of corruption, and strengthen fragile economic infrastructures and judicial systems.

### The United States

As the main international actor, the U.S. is interested in democratization and regional stability. After the Cold War, NATO’s military commander General John Galvin pushed hardest to reshape the Alliance. “Galvin forced NATO to look to its flanks: the Mediterranean, the Balkans the Black Sea and eventually, toward the newly independent states in Central Asia.”<sup>6</sup>

The wider Black Sea area represents an important battlefield against terrorists, weapon of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation, drug smuggling and human trafficking. It has now also

become a battlefield for energy resources and point of resistance to Russian imperial pretense. Diversification of energy resources has become a priority for the U.S. and a means to avoid energy blackmail “Greater diversity of oil production remains important … The Caspian Sea can also be a rapidly growing new area of supply.”<sup>7</sup> The U.S. is also interested in helping countries from the region maintain normal environmental standards. The “U.S. is working with the Black Sea and Caspian Sea border states to ensure that they develop adequate oil spill response capabilities.”<sup>8</sup> Recently, the U.S. seems interested in creating an “influence zone” between Russia and the EU.

#### The European Union

E.U. involvement in the area is more discreet—“given the crowded agenda of the Euro-Atlantic community since the collapse of communism fifteen years ago, there was little time or political energy left to address the wider Black Sea region.”<sup>9</sup> But in January 2007 E.U. borders were established on the Black Sea shore with Romanian and Bulgarian accession. Because the E.U. does not want to import conflicts or tensions, it is likely that no other members will be admitted in the near future. Instead, to encourage wider cooperation, the EU will use its European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) instruments. For the E.U., and especially for France, Russia is an important partner whose views on further enlargement must be kept in mind.

#### NATO

As a politico-military structure, NATO is involved in competition with the Russian Federation but also pursues cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council. The Alliance has not achieved consensus on policy regarding Russia: while U.S. is clearly “against” Russia, France and Germany want a greater understanding. On the Alliance’s south-eastern flank, Romania and Bulgaria play a major role in support of U.S. and NATO interests in the area. NATO’s foreign policy is orientated toward eastern extension, including dialogue with Georgia and Ukraine, and other eventual candidates, through the Individual Partnership Action Plan mechanism.

#### The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

The SCO “is an intergovernmental organization founded in Shanghai on 15 June 2001 by … Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.”<sup>10</sup> The main goals of the organization are to create a commonwealth of “independent” states to develop effective cooperation in political affairs, the economy and trade, science and technology, culture, education, energy, military, transportation, environmental protection and other fields; provide

and maintain regional peace, security and stability for all the organization's states; improve Russia-China relations; promote a new international political and economic order featuring democracy, justice, and rationality; improve friendship and mutual trust among member states; oppose U.S. and EU intrusion, including U.S. withdraw from its military bases in Central Asia; and also to defend the Kremlin's interests in Central Asia and to guard Russia's southern border. In 2005 Iran, India, Pakistan and Mongolia were received in the SCO with observer status. Due to its goals and perspectives, SCO is often seen as the new Warsaw Treaty.

### Regional Geopolitical Tendencies

In the Black Sea and Balkan area there are two main geopolitical tendencies: one is to include qualified countries in the EU and NATO and keep this option open for Ukraine and Moldova; the other is Russia's efforts to bind Ukraine and Moldova to its own politico-military and economic bloc.

EU enlargement contributes to Balkan peace and stability and creates the premises for NATO enlargement. EU officials are aware that Balkan problems are European problems and that, for their own interest, they can no longer neglect the wider Black Sea area's security dilemmas. The energy dependence of all European states favors Russia's plans to regain a part of its traditional sphere of influence. At the same time, Russia's weakness is that its main oil and gas pipelines pass through Ukraine and Poland, so energy transit is controlled by regional actors whose interests must be taken into consideration. In addition, the U.S. initiative to create a buffer zone between Russia and Germany complicates the politico-economic equation.

Transnistria's separation from Moldova was a proof of Russian intent to maintain its regional advantages. Encouraged by Russia, the Slavic minority in the eastern part of Moldova proclaimed an independent territory—Transnistria—in 1990. This region is an outlaw zone used as a terrorist base and organized crime center, an area favorable for drug, weapon, and human trafficking (included WMD), a black hole guarded by the remnant of the Russian 14<sup>th</sup> Army. In spite of the fact that Transnistria affects regional security and is internationally condemned, this black hole continues to exist. Officially, no-one has recognized Transnistria as an independent state. Russia considers area as a forward base and supports it with the forces that it had promised to withdraw from Moldova by 2001. Similar problems exist in Georgia with South Ossetia and Abkhazia but also in Azerbaijan with Nagorno-Karabakh.

### Regional Geo-economic Tendencies

The states of the wider Black Sea area are dependent on western economic assistance, which is essential for a profound socio-economic transformation. In these countries one can

find, in different proportions: old mentalities, weak democracies, corruption, some politicians with connections to organized crime networks, and drug, weapon, and human trafficking.

All the states of the region are dependent on oil and gas from the Russian Federation, and that is one of their major security vulnerabilities. That is why the West, sustained by the countries from the Western Black Sea, is looking to open access to energy resources from the Caspian Sea and Middle East. In this way the energy dependence of Eastern Europe and the EU upon the Russian Federation can be reduced. As I mentioned earlier, Russian oil and gas companies were involved in countries from Central and South Eastern Europe before these countries opted to become part of the EU. Now, if these companies (Gazprom, Lukoil, etc.) want to be competitive, they must either obey EU rules and open domestic energy markets, or withdraw and fall behind technologically. I believe that the Russian Federation will accept western partnership and transnational companies' co-operation and also that it will give up its reliance upon "forcing" in negotiations with neighboring states. In all this "game" Ukraine, as regional distributor, has the most advantageous position because it uses the Druzhba pipeline to obtain advantages from both the EU and the Russian Federation. On one side Moscow tries to block the access of Caspian oil into this pipeline, but on the other side the EU allocates financial resources to extend it to the Baltic Sea. At the same time Kyiv has a hard word regarding oil transport on the pipelines from Ukraine to Romania and Bulgaria.

In order to maintain its position as "energy leader" and to reduce Ukraine's positional advantages, Moscow is deeply involved in the oil pipeline project Novorossiysk-East Balkans and in the gas pipeline under the Black Sea to Istanbul. Another Russian course of action is its own energy companies' aggressive comportment in Central and Eastern Europe with clear intention to buy everything that can be bought. "In the United States vice-president Dick Cheney accused Russia of "energy blackmail" while Republican Sen. John McCain recommended that Russia be banned from the G-8."<sup>11</sup> Turkey also shows interest in constructing and managing oil and gas transport facilities from the Caspian Sea or Middle East to Europe, bypassing Russia. Starting in 1994, Turkey was involved in the project "Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan" as an alternative to the "Northern Route" controlled by Moscow. Turkey also intends to import natural gas from Russia and Iran using the future Nabucco pipeline, now in the planning stage. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Erzurum pipelines will provide alternative energy sources and will increase Turkey's strategic importance.

## Regional Geostrategic Tendencies

From a geostrategic point of view the wider Black Sea area is characterized by many crisis and conflicts (Former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Abkhazia). “It is widely and correctly believed that these unsolved fragments of Soviet Empire now serve as shipment points for weapons, narcotics and victims of trafficking and as breeding grounds for transnational organized crime and ... for terrorism.”<sup>12</sup>

Chechnya, a mostly Muslim country, proclaimed its independence from Russia in 1990-1991. Initially power was taken up by the ex-Soviet General Djokar Dudaev. Russia has since installed several pro-Russian administrations, but Chechen guerillas (including Chechens, Taliban, Al-Qaeda members, Fattah Saudi fundamentalists, Iranians, Palestinians, etc.) continue to fight. In 2001 Aslan Maskhadov, the elected president of separatist Chechnya, asked Eduard Shevardnadze to mediate a deal with Moscow but staged elections once again allowed the installation of a pro-Russian administration. In this “David against Goliath” fight, Chechnya chose the weak man’s weapon – terrorism. The explosion of two Russian civil airplanes and the death of many children in a Russian school were events that strengthened the U.S.-Russia antiterrorist partnership but did not bring an end to Chechen protests. Moscow’s interest is mainly focused on maintaining its territorial integrity. It also wishes to keep control of the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline that traverses the region. For the same reason, the Kremlin tries to extend its control in Georgia and to strengthen its deployment in Dagestan.

South Ossetia started its own secessionist movement in 1990-1991 when thousands of Georgian people were killed or displaced. In June 1992 Boris Yeltsin mediated a cease fire and deployed 1700 soldiers as “peace force.” A working group was created including the OSCE, Russian, Georgia, North Ossetia, and EU. The 2003 regime change in Tbilisi and active U.S. involvement will open new perspectives for negotiations. Georgia will not accept the secession of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It may be willing to accept local autonomy and withdraw of the Russian “peace forces.”

Transnistria proclaimed its independence from Moldova in 1990. As mentioned earlier, it represents a latent conflict situation that can emerge anytime. Moldova fought for its territory but was defeated by the 14<sup>th</sup> Russian Army. A group of Moldavian wars heroes known as the Ilascu Group is still illegally imprisoned in Transnistria, while this black hole continuous to exist and spread terrorists, criminals, laundered money, weapons (including W.M.D.), drugs, and slaves. “Transnistria, an area of Eastern Moldova, also has secessionist aspirations supported by Russia. The region is ruled by former communists and is heavily criminalized.”<sup>13</sup>

The Balkans has a major NATO military presence but also many unsolved problems. The region is passing through a profound restructuring process. The U.S. controls all significant developments concerning conflict management, democratization, economic and social development, regional security integration, and EU and NATO integration. Today post-conflict management in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia is under international control but stability has not yet been achieved.

The Balkan security environment is also affected by the trafficking in strategic weapons and other forms of smuggling. This threat, combined with the terrorist phenomena and organized crime, presents an ugly image.

#### Present Vulnerabilities, Risks and Threats to Regional Security and Their Influences on the Global Security Environment.

##### Regional Vulnerabilities.

The main vulnerability of the region is determined by the cultural, political and economic differences between constituent countries. Other regional vulnerabilities are those characteristic for all the states passing through the transitional process from tyranny to democracy:

- Almost all the countries were communist, and the collapse of communism threw them into a political vacuum. They tried to get out by initiating difficult transitions;
- Their economies passed through a transitory phase which influenced the quality of life;
- Many of them have great ethnic, cultural, and religious variety;
- All are characterized by high levels of corruption and an incoherent judicial framework;
- Some countries confront socio-political ambiguity and hesitation when they seek to choose the Euro-Atlantic path;
- All are constrained by energy dependence on the Russian Federation;
- Politicians are often involved in illegal activities;
- There are tendencies to subordinate parliamentary and governmental activity to groups or parties' special interests.

##### Risks and Threats to Regional Security

The main threat to regional security is Russia, which wants to maintain its hegemony by supporting secessionist enclaves, using sabotage and paramilitary violence, and resorting to energy blackmail and Trotskyist tactics. Reaction to the Romanian-led Black Sea Forum was a

clear example of Russia political sabotage. In the words of one analyst, “the struggle for a European security system in the Black Sea brings the tactics of Trotsky into collision with the political philosophy of Shuman and Monet.”<sup>14</sup> Other risks and threats include:

- International terrorist elements, illegal migration, and human trafficking under criminal control;
- Instability in the neighboring Central Asia and Caucasus;
- “Frozen conflicts” and the formula for new state failure;
- The existence of important conventional arsenals and the difficulty of guarding them;
- Proliferation of Weapon of Mass Destruction;
- Transnational organized crime;
- Inefficient management of public affairs and inefficient or corrupt governance;
- Negative geo-physical, meteo-climatic or associated phenomena, coming from the environment or reflecting its degradation, including the results of unhealthy human activities;
- Historically poor relations between some states;
- Huge Islamic domestic pressure on Turkey;
- A Muslim emigration into northern countries;
- An incompatibility between military and civilian approaches to addressing existing conflicts;
- The absence of a coherent international judicial framework, agreed to by all the states from the region, and capable of resolving demands for local autonomy or independence;
- Russian measures to establish a new hegemonic order, as

in and around the former Soviet Union [there] is a struggle between the ‘soft power’ of Russia and the ‘soft power’ of the West for the political orientation of the countries in Europe’s East, for economic influence in these regions, and for an extension of their respective alliance systems and multilateral institutions<sup>15</sup>;

- A Russian - Turkish alliance striving for leadership in the Black Sea at the expense of the U.S. and EU;

Potential regional dangers include:

- Conflicts between Russia and former Soviet states over ethnic, territorial or resources access issues;

- Disputes between China, on one side, and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan or Russia, on the other side, caused by the separatism of the Turkic Uyghur of Xinjiang province;
- Ethnic conflicts in Serbia, Romania, Slovakia or Ukraine, generated by the Hungarian minority's secessionist demands;
- Conflict between Iran, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan over ethnic issues, with Iranian interference into Azeri internal affairs;
- A conflict between Romania and Ukraine over the Chilia-Bastroe channel, Snake Island and a possible Danube Delta ecological disaster;
- Reunion between Romania and Moldova, capable of changing the regional balance of power;
- The failure of Western projects for linkage between Caspian and Central Asia energy resources and European markets, as a result of increased regional instability;
- Premature international disengagement from former Yugoslavia that might generate a new wave of conflict;
- A Western refusal to integrate countries from the region into NATO and the EU as a result of their failure to implement international standards, or of domestic resistance;
- The irrational division of Europe between West and East or North and South.

#### Western interests in the Balkans and Black Sea region

The end of the Cold War and the Yugoslav wars showed that the Black Sea and Balkan area is still unstable. The main social current is a nationalist one, provoked by the former communist representatives, in undeveloped ex-communist societies with rudimentary economies but great social demands. This is the context within which the great powers must pursue their interests. First in line are the EU and U.S., with some small differences between them; second are the Russian Federation and Turkey which are becoming more closely associated as “status quo” powers on the Black Sea; and third are the smaller littoral countries.

#### The US Strategic Perspective

The basic aims of U.S. strategy towards the region are: to win the “soft war” against Russia (that could be transformed in a second Cold War), to anchor the post-communist societies in the Euro-Atlantic security community, to support democratic and market reforms and push for early integration into the E.U., to influence regional energy policy, and to increase NATO presence.

For the U.S. the area represents an opportunity to secure access to energy resources by supporting a connection from Europe to Central Asia through the Caucasus, strengthen its position between China and the West, and fight against communism on behalf of democracy and the free market economy. For the future, U.S. energy policy in the region will be focused on:

- Support[ing] the effort of private investors and regional governments to develop the Shah Deniz gas pipeline in order to help Turkey and Georgia diversify their natural gas supply and help Azerbaijan export its gas;
- Encourag[ing] Greece and Turkey to link their pipelines to allow European consumers access to Caspian resources;
- Deepen[ing] commercial dialogue with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and other Caspian states to provide ... a stable business climate for energy ... projects;
- Assist[ing] U.S. companies in their energy dialogue with Russian authorities.<sup>16</sup>

In this area the U.S. also faces impediments and retrains. In spite of its experience of Romania and Bulgaria, the reformist movements of Black Sea area countries are often weak. Also, direct and indirect Russian influence inside these states, especially in Ukraine, is quite strong. Most of these countries confront 'frozen' or 'melting' ethnic conflicts. Russia is using words like nationalism, patriotism and independence to jeopardize successful nation building on a modern democratic basis and to maintain its hegemony in these countries. This can be counteracted only by the increased political maturity of those societies together with the implementation of democracy and the rule of law.

Several other obstacles to the U.S. strategy for the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Black Sea states need to be considered:

- The events of 9/11 fundamentally changed U.S. international policy, especially regarding NATO integration. While focused on its fight against terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. lost touch with the pace of change while Russia took advantage of it in its attempt to break Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia's will for future Euro-Atlantic integration;
- The Russia – Turkey "alliance" for Black Sea dominance seeks to banish U.S. and EU influence from the region and ignores the desires of smaller regional powers;
- Moscow took decisive advantage of the misunderstandings between Washington and key Central Asian regimes (Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan). Russia was able to push out or marginalize American military presence and political influence in the region. The principled rejection by Washington to the Andijon massacre convinced

Uzbek president Islam Karimov that Moscow is a better friend to authoritarian leaders than the West and Washington in particular;

- Major discord with European great powers after the American intervention in Iraq (especially France and Germany) has deprived the U.S. of allies.

At present we could hardly talk about any substantive compatibility between the policies of the US and the EU towards the Black Sea post-Soviet space. The discord is along the following lines. First – the attitudes towards Russia. While Washington perceives Moscow as an opponent, if not a rival in the key issues of Black Sea democratization and reformation agenda, Berlin and Paris share the understanding of Russia's legitimate right to keep its own sphere of influence around its borders in order to balance the extension of the Atlantic Alliance to the east.<sup>17</sup>;

- More recently, broader cooperation between Washington, London, Paris and Berlin on wider Black Sea area issues has derived from energy considerations. EU enlargement remains uncertain: while Washington sees this as a means to spread democracy and stability, the EU great powers, headed by Germany, fears that further enlargement will mean importing instability, poverty and ethnic conflicts.

#### The European Union (E.U.) Strategic Perspective

E.U. strategy regarding the wider Black Sea area is expressed in the "European Neighborhood Policy (E.N.P.)" or through "extended Europe." These terms represents new concepts that were invented to diminish the expectations of the countries from the region that hoped to be received as E.U. members. The danger of being drawn deeper into the labyrinth of irresolvable conflicts, tribal contests, corruption, organized crime, inter-communal intolerance and hectic geopolitical shifts in regions like the South Caucasus, prevent major European capitals from adopting a clear and efficient political position on the regional agenda. For a long period of time E.U. borders will be closed to any enlargement.

The E.N.P. is an insufficient and transitory solution to the area's real problems. It will be used to strengthen E.U. borders, but also to balance Russian vanity. The E.N.P. is an instrument designed to develop programs to support neighboring nations outside the institutional process of accession negotiations. Cooperation is offered as a recompense for being left outside.

A successful European strategy towards the Black Sea is dependent upon the Brussels' and Washington's capacity to coordinate their vision and priorities for the region. The world of multi-polarity is taking form in the post-Iraq global environment, and will push Europe and the U.S. to recognize the communalities, rather than the diversity of interest between them.

The wider Black Sea region ... dominates the entire Euro-Asian energy corridor from trans-Ukrainian oil and gas pipelines running to the markets in Europe's North, to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline running to the Mediterranean. A new Euro-Atlantic strategy geared towards anchoring and stabilizing the region can bring the vast energy reserves of the Caspian Basin and Central Asia to Europe...<sup>18</sup>

### Actual and Future Solutions to Evolve Security Environment in the Black Sea and Balkan Area

#### Measures to Evolve the Regional Security Environment

The Black Sea and Balkan regional security environment is influenced both by the transitional process of each country to democracy and free markets and by their inclusion into the Euro-Atlantic security complex. In this respect, all the countries that are neighboring the Black Sea have already established formal relations with NATO and the EU;

- Romania and Bulgaria are NATO members from 2004 and EU members from January 2007;
- Turkey, a NATO member country, has established its own path toward EU integration;
- Russia, Ukraine and Georgia have been Partnership for Peace members from 1994, and EU partners from 1996. There is a special NATO-Russia Council and a NATO-Ukraine Commission.

In this political environment risks and threats involve a multitude of factors. The Russian Federation applies a policy of hegemony perfected over a hundred years. After 9/11 and the Gulf War, U.S. interests in the region have increased exponentially. Between these two superpowers, the EU, an organization that is still developing its foreign policy and internal laws, was not able to adopt an intelligible point of view. Its hesitations between Russia and the U.S. were caused both by its desire to improve relations with the U.S. after the American intervention in Iraq, and because Russia is and will probably remain a critical economic partner in regard to energy transfers. The small countries' opinion doesn't matter, with their undeveloped economies; these countries can easily be blackmailed or manipulated.

The main courses of action for an improvement of the regional security environment are: a continuously strengthened U.S. presence; deeper EU involvement; and expanded international cooperation on a basis of equality. Also, a Transatlantic Strategy for Stabilization and Integration of the Black Sea Area (SIMN)<sup>19</sup> can be applied:

- Create a NATO legitimate action space in the area;
- Attract Russia as a partner;

- Co-ordinate the Euro-Atlantic community's efforts and interests;
- Stabilize the less developed states, based on democracy and institutional development;
- Develop regional cooperation;
- Extend positive democratic experience from Central Europe to the Black Sea area.

In recent years, NATO improved its PfP program and, starting with 2002, a new program was launched – the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). IPAP's main role is to establish priorities and organize all the aspects of relations between the Alliance and individual partners. It is a transforming instrument which can further the integration process, especially for the countries of the Black Sea and Balkan area. NATO's Partnership Action Plan (PAP) is also a useful instrument which can be applied to solve specific problems.

#### The US Approach to the Regional Security Environment

The core of U.S. strategy in the area is to win the “soft war” against the Russian Federation and its SCO allies, to reduce the influence of Russia in the Black Sea and Balkan region, to open up the area to European institutions and the possibilities of European integration, to safeguard the Euro-Asian energy corridor, and to keep Turkey linked to the West. To accomplish its goals, U.S. regional policy must be focused on:

- Promoting and applying an energy security policy that can offer alternative solutions to oil and gas exploitation and distribution from the Caucasus to Western Europe and Turkey without Russian involvement. In this way Russian influence over the European economy and the East European countries' political orientation will be diminished. The U.S. must invest in regional energy infrastructure projects (alternative oil or gas pipelines, refineries, and so on) together with the new democracies;
- Offering direct or indirect financial, economic, political and military support to all former communist countries which are willing to break away from Russian imperialism;
- Involvement in all the bilateral and multilateral programs and initiatives promoted by the countries from the area, in order to improve the regional security environment, and promote democracy and free markets;
- Helping East European countries to promote an “Open Door” external policy, both for European and Euro-Atlantic institutions and foreign investments and free markets;

- Strengthening economic and military cooperation with Romania and Bulgaria in order to demonstrate that the Western way is the right way;
- Supporting Georgia and Moldova in their actions to solve the “frozen conflicts” while maintaining these countries’ territorial integrity and independence;
- Improving bilateral relation with Turkey and adopting measures to break Russian efforts to attract Turkey into a Black Sea partnership against the U.S. and EU. Washington must continue to support Turkey’s agenda for EU membership—it must be demonstrated that the EU is not a “Christian Club”;
- Urging Russia to lift sanctions against Moldova and Georgia and supporting regional demilitarization. Promoting measures against the SCO using economic means;
- Continuing the “Open Door” policy regarding admission to European and Euro-Atlantic structures, breaking Stalin’s *cordon sanitaire* of countries neighboring Russia, and pushing NATO’s borders near Russia;
- Promoting a replacement of Russian-Turkish hegemony on the Black Sea with an EU—focused, democratic, and interdependent system of littoral states;
- Supporting the financial effort of regional governments to develop the Shah Deniz gas pipeline, the Nabucco pipeline, and similar initiatives that by-pass Russian territory;
- Encouraging a Greek-Turkish dialogue on energy and regional security topics;
- Helping regional countries to adopt counterterrorist measures in order to protect energy and maritime infrastructures.

The U.S. policy is “to seek and support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”<sup>20</sup> The best way to provide enduring security for the American people in the view of its political leaders is to provide world-wide democracy. The U.S. affirms strongly that it has security interests in the wider Black Sea regions but also that it is going to support the Balkan countries in reconstruction and their eventual integration into Euro-Atlantic institution. Integration and not an isolation is the only way to improve the regional security environment in the Black Sea and Balkan Region and implicitly throughout Europe.

That is why U.S. promotes a series of programs and initiative such as the following:

- “The U.S. Theater Security Cooperation program” is the centerpiece of the American effort to promote common security to strengthen the transatlantic link, to assist these allied countries in developing the capabilities required to conduct effective

- peacekeeping and contingency operations, to prepare the way for success, and to reduce the potential for a U.S. involvement;
- “The Caspian Guard Initiative” coordinates security cooperation activities in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan with those of CENTCOM and other U.S. government agencies to enhance Caspian security;
  - “Security Cooperation Activities” are managed programs planned and executed for the purpose of shaping the future security environment, spreading democratic values, and developing the potential of nations;
  - “The National Guard State Partnership Program” is a united security cooperation program;
  - “The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program” address non-proliferation issues;
  - “The EUCOM Sustainment and Stability Operations Program” in Georgia focuses on enhancing the capabilities of Georgian military forces to assist in preparing deployments in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM;

The Black Sea and Balkan region is not just an area of interest for the great powers; it is practically a war zone in which the U.S. has the main role. The war in question is one between democracy and tyranny, between open and closed markets, between good governance and anarchy, between freedom and slavery. Between a weak West and a sly Russian Federation only the U.S. can ensure a real balance of power in the region.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> R. Asmus, B.P. Jackson, The Black Sea and the frontiers of freedom, 19

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 20

<sup>3</sup> CIA – The World Fact book 2004, 101

<sup>4</sup> A. Cohen, C. Irwin, US Strategy in the Black Sea Region, 6

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>6</sup> Dana Priest, The Mission, 254

<sup>7</sup> \*\*\* National Energy Policy: Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group, May 2001, 8-6

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 8-12

<sup>9</sup> R. Asmus, B.P. Jackson, The Black Sea and the frontiers of freedom, 18

<sup>10</sup> James Brian McNabb, The Unanticipated Utility of US Security Structures: Avoiding Cold War II in Central Asia, available from "Comparative Strategy" ed.2006, 316

<sup>11</sup> I. Khrestin, I. Bourtman, Power play: Russia's gas move aids Ukraine, available from The Washington Times 30 Jan. 2007, A19

<sup>12</sup> R. Asmus, B.P. Jackson, The Black Sea and the frontiers of freedom, 21

<sup>13</sup> A. Cohen, C. Irwin, US Strategy in the Black Sea Region, 7

<sup>14</sup> B. Jackson, The "Soft War" for Europe's East, 11

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>16</sup> \*\*\* National Energy Policy: Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group, May 2001, 8-13

<sup>17</sup> R. Asmus, J. Forbrig, K. Dimitrov, A New Euro Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region, 23

<sup>18</sup> R. Asmus, B.P. Jackson, The Black Sea and the frontiers of freedom, 23

<sup>19</sup> M. Ognyan, M. Lessenski, P. Ralchev, Transatlantic Strategy for Black Sea Zone Stabilization and Integration, available from A New Euro Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region, 85-99

<sup>20</sup> \*\*\* The National Security Strategy of the USA, 1

